Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 1:29-39): On leaving the synagogue he entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

"Everyone is looking for you"

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Today, we contemplate Jesus in Capernaum, the center of his ministry, and more specifically in the house of Simon Peter: "On leaving the synagogue he entered the house of Simon and Andrew" (Mk 1:29). There, he finds his family —those who hear the word of God and act on it (cf. Lk 8:21). Simon's mother-in-law is bedridden with illness, and He, with a gesture that goes beyond the anecdotal, takes her hand, lifts her from her prostration, and allows her to wait on them.

Jesus approaches the suffering poor brought to him and heals them simply by extending his hand; with only brief contact with Him, the source of life, they are liberated and saved.

Everyone seeks Christ, some explicitly and diligently, others perhaps without being aware of it. Thus, St. Augustine confessed, "our heart is restless until it rests in you"

But just as we seek Him because we need to be freed from evil and the Evil One, He approaches us to

make possible what we could never achieve on our own. He has made Himself “...weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some” (1 Cor 9:22).

Jesus’ hand is extended towards us as we lie overwhelmed by so many evils; it's enough to open our own, and we will find ourselves standing and renewed for service. We can “open” our hand through prayer, taking example from the Lord: "Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed" (Mk 1:35).

Furthermore, every Sunday’s Eucharist is our encounter with the Lord who comes to lift us from the sin of routine and discouragement, to make us living witnesses of an encounter that constantly renews us, and that truly sets us free in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You” (Saint Augustine)

- “Christianity has its starting-point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not simply a case of man seeking God, but of God who comes in Person to speak to man of himself (...). God seeks man out, moved by his fatherly heart.” (Saint John Pau II)

- “In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a religious being.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 28)